

MONONUCLEOSIS (INFECTIOUS)

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Infectious mononucleosis is a very mild illness in infants and young children. However, it can occur at any age.

CAUSE: Herpesviruses, typically, Epstein-Barr virus (EBV); about 5%-7% of cases are caused by cytomegalovirus (CMV).

SYMPTOMS: In young children there are often no symptoms. Symptoms may include fever, sore throat, swollen glands (especially behind the neck), headache, and tiredness. Sometimes there is a rash. Young adults may have jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes) and an enlarged spleen. Infectious mononucleosis usually lasts from one week to several weeks.

SPREAD: From person to person usually through saliva. Spread can occur by kissing or sharing items contaminated with saliva (e.g., drinking cups, bottles, or toys).

INCUBATION: It takes about 4 to 6 weeks from the time a person is exposed until symptoms develop.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD: From many weeks to a year or more. In some adults the virus can be present for long time periods.

EXCLUSION: Until the child is well enough to return to routine activities. Because children can have the virus without any symptoms, and people can be contagious for such a long time, excluding children (or staff) who have mononucleosis will not prevent spread. If the spleen is enlarged, children should avoid contact sports for 6 weeks or until the healthcare provider has given approval for the child to continue with the sport(s).

DIAGNOSIS: See your healthcare provider. Blood tests are available, but may be difficult to interpret in children less than 4 years of age.

TREATMENT: Call your healthcare provider.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after any contact with saliva or items with saliva on them. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.**
2. Clean and disinfect mouthed toys at least daily and when soiled.
3. DO NOT kiss an infected child on the lips or have contact with their saliva.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.

Prepared by Hennepin County Community Health Department with the support of the local and state disease prevention and control staff and childcare consultants.